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## Saguaro National Park News Release

*For Immediate Release*

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### February Programs Offered at Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park is offering a series of programs this winter that will explore the wonderful natural and cultural history of the park. Many of these programs will also celebrate the park's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, coming up on March 1, 2008. Join naturalists for an evening walk in the park, or join a local expert for a presentation in the visitor center. Programs will be offered at both districts. There is no charge for interpretive programs, but park entrance fees apply.

#### **Special Programs offered at the Tucson Mountain District (Saguaro West) include:**

**February 2      7:30 a.m.      Bird Walk**

Join birding guide John Higgins on an early morning walk to see some of the twenty-five species of birds that are year-round residents of Saguaro National Park. Meet at the Red Hills Visitor Center. The group will caravan to several nearby locations. The walking is considered easy, on flat but dirt and rocky trails. Persons of all ages, with or without bird watching experience, are welcome. Participants are encouraged to bring water and sun protection, along with binoculars and bird guides if you have them. The walk usually lasts 2 hours. For more information call 733-5158. No reservations needed. ***This program will also be offered on Mar. 1, at 7:00 am.***

**February 2      10:45 a.m.      Homesteading Adventures in the Desert**

As we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saguaro National Park, join a ranger who will speak about the historic adventures surrounding Mexican American homesteaders in and around the park. ***This program will also be offered at 10:45 a.m. Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays through April.*** 30 minute patio talk. *Accessible.*

**February 2      3:00 p.m.      The War on Invasive Plants in the Sonoran Desert**

Joint special guest speaker Meg Weesner, the park's Chief of Science and Resources Management, to learn how invasive plants from other continents are threatening saguaros and other plants of the Sonoran Desert. How did they get here? Why are they a problem? What can we do about them? A PowerPoint slide presentation will provide background, and hands-on samples of buffelgrass and fountain grass will be available. The program will be held in the Red Hills Visitor Center auditorium. *Accessible.*

**February 3      1:15 p.m.      Masters with Microscopes – 75 Years to Decode the Desert**

Our understanding of saguaro cactus ecology today is in part thanks to several fearless scientists who made their home at the edge of the Tucson Mountains in 1909 to count cacti and watch the desert grow. ***This program is shown every Sunday through April, at 1:15 pm.*** 30 min Patio Talk. *Accessible.*

**February 4      1:15 p.m.      Wandering up the Wash Hike**

Wander with a naturalist, as we journey up a nearby wash to explore Saguaro's natural and cultural heritage. We'll follow in the footsteps of many who have gone during and before the park's 75 years, to learn about some of the area's early mining and CCC camp history, how many plants have survived in the desert for centuries, and see Petroglyphs that were carved into rock between AD 300 and AD 1450. Participants should bring water and sun protection for this 1½ hour, 2 mile walk. Closed-toed shoes are recommended. Meet on the Red Hills Visitor Center patio. ***This program will also be offered on February 11 and 18 at 1:15 pm.***

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#### **EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

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**February 8      1:15 p.m.      From Cute and Cuddly to Creepy and Crawley – 75 years of Desert Wildlife Protection in Saguaro National Park**

This PowerPoint slide program will briefly explore the history of wildlife conservation and attitudes in America, and how these subjects have evolved within the National Park Service. Examples will be given to explain why all wildlife is now protected in our parks, even those species which many people find “less than loveable.” ***This program will be offered every Friday and Saturday through April, at 1:15 pm. 20 minutes. Accessible.***

**February 9      3:00 p.m.      The Changing Cactus Forest – A History of Saguaro National Park**

Since Saguaro National Park was established in 1933, there have been visible changes in the plant community. How healthy are the park’s saguaros? How has the park’s famous “Cactus Forest changed over time? Join special guest speaker park biologist Don Swann as he reviews more than 75 years of research on the saguaro and discusses what we know about the past, present and future of this magnificent cactus. *Accessible.*

**February 9      4:00 p.m.      Twilight Hikes**

These every other Saturday hikes are 2 to 2½ miles and 2 to 2½ hours in length. They are scheduled to begin approximately one hour before sunset. The terrain is sandy, with some rock outcroppings. Some of these can be skirted, but some must be climbed. We will return to the parking area in the fading light after sunset, on an alternate trail or along a rocky old mining road. As space is limited, advance registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5158 or 733-5191. The age limit for this hike is 7 years and older. ***This program will also be offered on February 23 at 4:15 pm.***

**February 18      4:00 p.m.      Sunset Hike**

This hike climbs 700 feet to a ridgeline for the sunset, and descends the trail solely under the light of the full moon. The hike takes 3½ to 4 hours, and is 3½ miles in length. As space is limited, advanced registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5158 or 733-5191.

**February 19      4:30 p.m.      “Moon Take Night Make Day” Hike**

This gentle, relatively flat, 2½ mile hike travels up a desert wash during the transition from day to night. The hike takes approximately 3 hours. Advanced registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5158 or 733-5191.

**February 21      7:30 p.m.      “Moonrise Over the Mountains” Patio Talk**

Offered on the night of the full moon, this campfire talk on the back patio of the Red Hills Visitor Center allows a relaxing view of the full moon as it rises above the cactus forest. Program is approximately 45 minutes. Bring a lawn chair and warm clothing. No advanced registration is required. *Accessible.*

**Special Programs offered at the Rincon Mountain District (Saguaro East) include:**

**February 1      11:00 a.m.      Little House on the Desert**

Join “Viola Freeman” on a one-mile, 2 hour walk to find out what life was like here 75 years ago. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. Advance registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153.

**February 1      7:00 p.m.      75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Night Walk**

This year Saguaro National Park celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday. To celebrate, the park is offering a special series of programs highlighting important park themes. Join Park Ranger Josh Boles for this 1.5 hour hike through the Sonoran Desert at night and discover how important dark nights are to the plants and animals of Saguaro National Park. Bring water and a flashlight. As space is limited, advanced registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This program will also be offered on February 15.***

**February 2      9:00 a.m.      Bridal Wreath Falls Hike**

This strenuous half-day, 7-mile hike, led by Park Ranger Curt Treichel, will take you to Bridal Wreath Falls and back (routes vary weekly). Wear sturdy hiking boots and dress for the weather. Bring a trail lunch and plenty of water. *This hike meets at the Douglas Spring Trailhead.* Advance registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This program will also be offered on February 9, 16 and 23.***

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**February 3      9:00 a.m.      Ridgeline Hike**

Join Park Ranger Josh Boles on this 3-hour, 4-mile hike that exposes you to the many forms of life above the desert floor. Wear sturdy hiking shoes, dress for the weather, bring plenty of water and a trail snack. Advance registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This program will be offered again on February 10, 17 and 24.***

**February 3      10:00 a.m.      1933 to Today – Saguaro National Park**

Take an easy, 1-mile walk back in time to learn how and why Saguaro National Park was created. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. Advance registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This program will also be offered on February 10, 17 and 24.***

**February 5      8:30 a.m.      Desert Bird Walk**

Bring your binoculars and join the quest for desert birds. This easy 2-hour, 1-mile walk will introduce you to some of the birds that call Saguaro National Park home. Advance registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This program will also be offered on February 12, 19 and 26.***

**February 5      9:00 a.m.      Desert Morning Hike**

Join a park naturalist for this 3-hour, 4-mile exploration of Saguaro National Park. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring water and a trail snack. Advance registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This program will also be offered on February 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 and 27.***

**February 5      7:00 p.m.      Roadrunners – Almost Human**

Did you know that roadrunners pair for life? Or that the female roadrunner only selects a mate that brings the right gift? Or that roadrunners gobble down dangerous scorpions? Join researcher Jim Cornett in the visitor center auditorium for a presentation discussing these and many other roadrunner topics. Advance registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. *Accessible.*

**February 9      8:00 a.m.      Buffelgrass Weed Pull**

Volunteers will work with park staff to remove a patch of buffelgrass, an invasive non-native plant which threatens the Sonoran Desert. We will be meeting at the Rincon Mountain Visitors Center, and will then carpool to the Javelina Picnic Area work site. Please park in the Administrative Parking Lot (1<sup>st</sup> right after entering the park, follow to the parking lot just south of visitor center parking area). Wear sturdy hiking shoes, long pants and a hat. Bring water and gloves (if you have them); tools and gloves will be provided. Following the event, we will relax over snacks and beverages. Please RSVP by calling 733-5187, or sign up at the visitor center so we can get a general head count. We look forward to seeing you there! This activity will end at 11:30 am.

**February 12      7:00 p.m.      Star Party**

Join park naturalists for an introduction to astronomy and a look at the desert night sky. Telescopes and binoculars will be available. Advance registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5153. *Accessible.*

**February 14      10:00 a.m.      Prehistoric People in the Sonoran Desert**

Join Volunteer Walter Coe on the visitor center patio for an exploration into the prehistory of this area. Learn who lived here over a thousand years ago and what they used for food, clothing and shelter. ***This program will also be offered on February 28.*** *Accessible.*

**February 14      7:00 p.m.      Oh Deer!**

Join biologist Melanie Bucci in the visitor center auditorium as she shares the natural history of the two deer species that call Saguaro National Park home, the Mule Deer and the White-tailed Deer, and what has been learned from nearly 75 years of studying and monitoring these creatures in the park. Advanced registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. *Accessible.*

**February 16      3:00 p.m.      75 Years at Saguaro National Park – An Illustrated History**

Join Park Ranger Laura Bolyard in the visitor center auditorium for a trip down memory lane as Saguaro National Park prepares to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This presentation, which includes many historic photos, takes a look at the events that helped shape Saguaro National Park. Advanced registration is recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. *Accessible.*

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**February 20     2:00 p.m.     Sunset/Moonrise Hike**

This strenuous seven-hour, seven-mile hike climbs 1100 feet into the Rincon Mountains for views of a desert sunset and a walk down under the full moon. Wear sturdy hiking boots, dress for the weather; bring a trail dinner, water and a flashlight. As space is limited, advanced registration is required, and can be made by calling 733-5153. Participants will be mailed directions and more detailed program information.

**February 20     7:00 p.m.     Lunar Eclipse Star Party**

Experience a Total Lunar Eclipse! On February 20<sup>th</sup> there will be a total lunar eclipse, an event that will not be repeated for another three and a half years. Join the staff of Saguaro National Park as we celebrate this rare event. We'll start out with a presentation in the visitor center auditorium, and then move out onto the patio to view the Eclipse. *Accessible*.

**Daily Programs**

In addition to the above listed special interpretive programs, both districts of Saguaro National Park offer daily patio talks, garden walks and short desert hikes. Please contact either visitor center for schedules, or check the park web site at [www.nps.gov/sagu](http://www.nps.gov/sagu).

**Visitor Center Locations and Phone Numbers**

Red Hills Visitor Center (Saguaro WEST)  
2700 North Kinney Road  
Tucson, AZ 85743

(520) 733-5158

Rincon Mountain Visitor Center (Saguaro EAST)  
3693 South Old Spanish Trail  
Tucson, AZ 85730

(520) 733-5153

For more information about Saguaro National Park and some of its partners, Friends of Saguaro National Park and the Western National Parks Association, visit these websites:

[www.nps.gov/sagu](http://www.nps.gov/sagu).

[www.friendsofsaguaro.org](http://www.friendsofsaguaro.org)

[www.wnpa.org](http://www.wnpa.org)